

Enfield thriller ends all square

Enfield 1, Wycombe Wanderers 1

A CONTROVERSIAL reprieve saved Wycombe Wanderers in the dying moments of their crucial Isthmian League cliffhanger with Enfield at Southbury Road on Monday, writes Mike Whitesman.

The sensational climax to a night of uncertainty came when referee Prest disallowed what had seemed at first a legitimate "goal", headed in by Tony Gibson, to finish off the last of several scrambles in the course of events.

Wycombe hearts sank and rose again in seconds, while the home fans greeted the shock decision with rage, reserving a loud, long chorus of 'boos' for Mr. Prest as he walked into the tunnel at full time.

But no one could reasonably deny that, overall, the rivals deserved an equal split of the points. The advantage swayed constantly in this, their third meeting of the season.

The Blues, with previous League and Amateur Cup wins at Loakes Park to their credit, set an early course for the hat-trick, exposing Enfield's covering three times in 13 minutes.

Johnny Hutchinson shot into the woodwork after seven minutes, and 'keeper Andy Williams bravely smothered a through pass as Larry Pritchard ran on to it in the home area four minutes later. Then Mick Smith

At the top . . .

ISTHMIAN LEAGUE

	P.	W.	D.	L.	Pts.
Sutton	29	24	1	4	49
Wycombe	27	20	4	3	44

cleared Tony Horseman's shot off the line.

Enfield survived these early trials, however, and turned the game back upfield, where John Maskell came off his line confidently to foil John Brookes, then later dealt capably with two menacing corners in quick succession.

Wanderers were visibly unsettled by their hosts' aerial superiority.

Neither back row held a rigid control on the opposing set of forwards, so a breakthrough looked forever a possibility. First blood, in fact, went to Wycombe in the 31st minute from a Ted Powell free kick.

John Delaney, the two-goal destroyer of Enfield's bid to retain the Amateur Cup, nodded down for Hutchinson, who thundered the ball into goal.

Wycombe welcomed back Keith Blunt on Monday, replacing Charlie Gale, while Vince Faulkner came in for Barry Baker—a tactical move clearly indicating their intention to play quickly from defence into attack, thus by-passing midfield.

Eager to capitalise on this new swing in their favour, the Blues simultaneously tightened at the back and opened out once again in the front line.

Micky Smith, surely the champions' most improved player, hardly put a foot wrong, while Williams pulled off many timely saves during the 90 minutes.

The 'keeper played a major part in securing a point for Enfield.

Nearing half-time, an incredible scramble unravelled itself only inches from the Wycombe line and exhausted a proportion of their 'lives'. In rapid succession, four shots ricocheted in and out of a mass of bodies, but Wanderers retained the lead until the 58th minute.

Chris Duggan, previously without a goal in 1971, chose an auspicious occasion to break his new year duck when rounding off a speedily executed movement begun on the left flank. Ken Gray found Tony Turley with an extended pass, from which the winger centred low for Duggan's header to deceive Maskell and swerve over the line.

The equaliser stirred fresh incentives in both teams.

Accordingly, the closing 30 minutes were played at an even faster, more furious tempo. What had always been a fluid end-to-end struggle, could now be measured in volts, so electric was the situation.

Each side placed particular favour with the long, probing ball, a considerable factor in a match flooded by exciting goal-mouth incidents.

As time slipped by, Gray outraced Rundle only for Maskell to pull down his shot one-handed.

Enfield had the ball in Wycombe's net after 39 minutes, but Mr. Prest blew for an infringement several seconds beforehand.

The Williams-Horseman duel resumed in the 88th minute, the 'keeper frustrating his opponent's efforts twice.

Seconds remained when Wanderers found themselves forced into a last-ditch stand inside their 'box'. Enfield saw a header bounce off the crossbar, before Gibson put the rebound home. But Wycombe claimed Maskell had been pushed, and, after consultations, Mr. Prest awarded them a free kick instead.

With some relief, therefore, Wanderers claimed their away point at the final whistle. Sutton, however, take a definite psychological advantage. They lead by five points; Wycombe have only two games in hand; and Enfield can be satisfied, at least, that they have put a spanner in the works as far as Wanderers are concerned.

ENFIELD: A. Williams; L. Tilley, B. Moffatt; J. Payne, P. Betson, M. Smith; C. Duggan, A. Gibson, J. Brookes, K. Gray, A. Turley. Sub.: S. Hill (not used).

WYCOMBE WANDERERS: J. Maskell; I. Rundle, K. Blunt; E. Powell, J. Delaney, V. Faulkner; A. Horseman, B. Bremer, K. Searle, L. Pritchard, J. Hutchinson. Sub.: B. Baker (not used).

Referee: H. Prest (Surrey).

Half-time: 0-1. Goalscorers: Enfield—Duggan (58); Wycombe—